

20. AN INTRODUCTION OF STREPTOPELIA PICTURATA
INTO THE AMIRANTES

C. W. Benson

On 23 September 1967 I. S. C. Parker collected for the National Museum of Kenya, Nairobi, two specimens of the Malagasy Turtledove Streptopelia picturata on St Joseph Atoll, in the Amirantes (see map in Watson et al. 1963, 179). Thanks to R. H. Carcasson and A. D. Forbes-Watson, I have had the loan of them, and they have been donated to the British Museum (Natural History).

Both are sexed as females. They have been compared with material of the grey-headed S. p. picturata (Temminck), of Malagasy, in the British Museum (Natural History), from which in colour they do not differ. But in wing-length (144, 154 mm) they are smaller, Benson (1967, 79) giving a range of 158-170 (mean 166.7) mm for 14 Malagasy females, 165-177 (mean 172.5) mm for 12 Malagasy males. They appear to represent a recent introduction--more likely artificial than natural--from the Seychelles. S. p. picturata was artificially introduced into the Seychelles in the nineteenth century, as recently discussed by Penny (1968, 271). It has there hybridised extensively with the endemic S. p. rostrata (Bonaparte), which in addition to colour-differences, including a vinous head, is smaller. Thus Benson (1967, 79) gives the wing-length of two females as 146, 147 mm only. Those of Parker's two specimens suggest that they do not represent true S. p. picturata but are the result of some hybridisation with rostrata. Some further particulars of them are as follows:

	Larger specimen (wing 154 mm)	Smaller specimen (wing 144 mm)
Weight	135 g	110 g
Irides	pale brown	pale brown
Skin around eye	maroon	-
Bill	horn-grey, base deep maroon	pale horn-grey, soft parts tinged maroon
Feet	dull maroon	dull maroon

Information is very desirable on the extent of this introduction into the Amirantes, where there is an endemic, vinous-headed, subspecies, S. p. saturata (Ridgway), discussed by Benson (1967, 76). Parker had informed me that one of the specimens he collected was with a vinous-headed bird. He was on St Joseph Atoll for less than a day, and so

cannot provide any information on the extent of the introduction of S. p. picturata. There is no information about saturata beyond that provided from specimens. W. L. Abbott collected it in 1892 on Ile Poivre, slightly to the south of St Joseph, and on Alphonse, 47 miles (76 km) south of the Amirantes proper (Ridgway 1895, '517).

References

- Benson, C. W. 1967. The birds of Aldabra and their status. Atoll Res. Bull. 118: 63-111.
- Penny, M. 1968. Endemic birds of the Seychelles. Oryx, 9: 267-275.
- Ridgway, R. 1895. On birds collected by Doctor W. L. Abbott in the Seychelles, Amirantes, Gloriosa, Assumption, Aldabra, and adjacent islands, with notes on habits, etc., by the collector. Proc. U.S. Nat. Mus. 18: 509-546 (actual date of publication June 24, 1896).
- Watson, G. E., Zusi, R. L., and Storer, R. E. 1963. Preliminary field guide to the birds of the Indian Ocean. Washington: Smithsonian Institution.